

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
USLO PEKING
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 3801

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, XC, UR, CH, US
SUBJ: SOVIETS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA: ONE YEAR LATER

REFS: A. RANGOON 2705; B. KUALA LUMPUR 4347; C. JAKARTA 10450

1. ALTHOUGH WE WOULD AGREE WITH MANY OF THE OBSERVATIONS
IN REF B, WE CONCUR GENERALLY WITH POLICY VIEWS EXPRESSED IN
REF C. AS PARA 8 REF B CORRECTLY INDICATES, SINGAPORE SUP-
PORTS A BALANCE OF U.S. AND SOVIET NAVAL FORCES IN THE REGION.
GOS IS ABSOLUTELY CONVINCED THAT USSR IS PURSUING IMPLACABLY
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A CALCULATED EFFORT TO EXPAND SOVIET POWER AND INFLUENCE

GRADUALLY IN THE REGION BY INCREASING ITS FISHING FLEETS, EXPANDING ITS NAVAL PRESENCE AND BY SEEKING EVERY POSSIBLE OPPORTUNITY TO PROMOTE ITS ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL INFLUENCE. GIVEN THIS PERCEPTION, GOS BELIEVES IT IS ESSENTIAL TO THE SECURITY AND STABILITY OF THE AREA THAT THE U.S. MATCH THE SOVIET MILITARY PRESENCE, AND IS DEEPLY CONCERNED THAT THE U.S. MAY REDUCE ITS MILITARY FORCES IN THE REGION TO A POINT WHERE THE STRATEGIC BALANCE WILL BE SERIOUSLY ALTERED IN FAVOR OF THE SOVIET UNION. THE GOS IS TOO IMPRESSED BY THE GROWTH OF SOVIET MILITARY POWER TO ACCEPT THE THESIS OF A "STABLE MIXTURE OF DISCRETE EQUILIBRIA" ADVANCED PARA 3 REF B.

2. ALTHOUGH GOS MAY HAVE AN EXAGGERATED PERCEPTION OF "SOVIET THREAT" AND OVERVALUE THE IMPORTANCE TO THE STABILITY OF THE REGION OF THE MAINTENANCE OF A SIGNIFICANT U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, WE SHOULD NONE THE LESS RECOGNIZE THAT THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE PAP LEADERSHIP STRONGLY HOLD TO THESE VIEWS. THE PRC'S CONSTANT STRESS ON THE SOVIET THREAT TO THE REGION TENDS TO RE-ENFORCE THIS VIEW AMONG THE CHINESE-EDUCATED WING OF THE PAP, AND CAUSES MANY IN THE GOVERNMENT TO WORRY WHETHER SOUTHEAST ASIA (INCLUDING SINGAPORE) WILL BE THE COCKPIT OF A PRC/USSR STRUGGLE FOR INFLUENCE. IN THEIR VIEW THIS PROVIDES AN ADDITIONAL REASON WHY IT IS IN SINGAPORE'S INTEREST TO HAVE U.S. NAVAL FORCES ACTING AS A KIND OF BUFFER IN THE REGION.

3. SINCE SEVENTH FLEET VISITS TO SINGAPORE ARE AN ACCEPTED PART OF THE LOCAL SCENE AND VERY MUCH WELCOMED BY THE COMMERCIAL COMMUNITY AND HAVE CAUSED NO DOMESTIC POLITICAL PROBLEMS TO DATE, WE WOULD CONSIDER THE MAINTENANCE OF U.S. NAVAL PRESENCE IN THE REGION AS PART OF THE "MIX OF DIPLOMATIC, ECONOMIC AND MILITARY MEANS" WHICH EMBASSY JAKARTA RECOMMENDS BE EMPLOYED TO MAINTAIN THE UMBRELLA OF CONTINUED U.S. INTEREST, PRESENCE AND CONFIDENCE (PARA 6 REF C).

4. WE ALSO AGREE WITH REF C THAT WE SHOULD NEITHER ENDORSE NOR OPPOSE THE ZONE OF PEACE, FREEDOM AND NEUTRALITY. ALTHOUGH THE ASEAN GOVERNMENTS HAVE ADOPTED THE PRINCIPLE, IT SEEMS QUITE CLEAR THAT THERE IS NO UNIFORM INTERPRETATION AND THAT DIFFERENCES EXIST CONCERNING ITS IMPLEMENTATION. FOR THE TIME
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BEING WE SHOULD HEAVE IT TO THE ASEAN GOVERNMENTS TO DECIDE HOW STRONGLY THEY WISH TO PROMOTE THE ZONE. SO FAR OUR FAILURE TO COME OUT WITH A RINGING ENDORSEMENT HAS CAUSED NO DAMAGE. IF WE ANNOUNCED OUR SUPPORT FOR IT MALAYSIA MIGHT BE PLEASED, BUT THE GOS AND POSSIBLY ONE OR TWO OTHER ASEAN GOVERNMENTS MIGHT INTERPRET SUCH AN ANNOUNCEMENT AS A SIGNAL THAT WE INTEND TO REDUCE OUR MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE REGION MUCH FURTHER THAN WE HAVE ALREADY.

5. WE CONCUR IN PROPOSAL REF B TO EXPAND THE PROGRAM OF GRADUATE
LEVEL TRAINING IN THE U.S. HOLDRIDGE

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